

CITY COUNCIL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MINUTES

September 11, 2013

The City Council Oversight Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met at 5:30 p.m. in the City Council Conference Room on the 11th day of September, 2013, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted in the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray 48 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT: Councilmember Kovach and Chairman Miller

ABSENT: Councilmembers Holman and Jungman

OTHERS PRESENT: Mayor Cindy Rosenthal
Mr. Roger Gallagher, 1522 East Boyd
Mr. Ken Komiske, Director of Utilities
Mr. Steve Lewis, City Manager
Mr. Chris Mattingly, Utilities Superintendent
Ms. Kathryn Walker, Assistant City Attorney
Ms. Syndi Runyon, Administrative Assistant IV

Item 1, being:

DISCUSSION REGARDING THE CURRENT CITY OF NORMAN WATER CONSERVATION PLAN AND POTENTIAL PLAN UPDATES.

Ms. Kathryn Walker, Assistant City Attorney, said the first Water Conservation Plan (WCP) was adopted in early 2000. She said the goal of the plan is to encourage conservation and identify triggers of mandatory conservation efforts. The WCP was updated in February 2013, and was identified in the Council Retreat as a priority issue. She said conservation measures are implemented by the City Manager and Stage 2 and Stage 3 measures require a proclamation to provide notice to the public. She said failure to comply can result in a citation; however, the City's practice has been to issue warnings first to achieve compliance because non-compliance is generally a public education issue. She said no citations have been issued because once citizens are made aware of the conservation measures, they comply. During the recent drought the City imposed both Stage 1 and Stage 2 measures and the City was ready to implement Stage 3 when it rained. She said Stage 3 has not been implemented in Norman since the plan was adopted.

Ms. Walker highlighted the triggers and restrictions of the current conservation plan as follows:

STAGE 1 – VOLUNTARY WATER CONSERVATION

TRIGGERS	RESTRICTIONS
Demand expected to equal supply capacity	Increase public education on ways to conserve
Lake level drops to 1034.0 feet	Review and reduce non-essential City water use
Temporary reduction in supply	Reduce City irrigation to every other day or less
Large portion of distribution system temporarily out of service	Request voluntary public reductions
Oklahoma City emergency connection is not available for use OR Central Oklahoma Master Conservancy District (COMCD) requests slight reduction in usage	Recommend Norman Utilities Authority (NUA) customers implement voluntary conservation measures (odd/even, time of day restrictions, etc.)

STAGE 2 – MODERATE (MANDATORY) WATER CONSERVATION

TRIGGERS	RESTRICTIONS
Demand is greater than supply by more than three million gallons per day (mgd) for two consecutive days with no relief in forecast	Recommend waiting to establish new landscaping
Reduction in long term source of supply	Eliminate non-essential City water use – reduce splash pad operation by two hours per day
Lake levels drop to 1032 feet or below	No washing paved surfaces – no washing vehicles except at commercial car washes – no excessive water run-off -no outdoor watering between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.
Large portion of distribution system temporarily out of service	Odd/even watering - no watering on Wednesdays and Thursdays

STAGE 3 – SEVERE (MANDATORY) WATER CONSERVATION

TRIGGERS	RESTRICTIONS
Demand is greater than supply by more than six million gallons per day (mgd) for two consecutive days with no relief in forecast	Landscaping watering one assigned day per week - not between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. (also applies to the City)
Reduced water pressure less than 25 pounds per square inch (psi) for 24 hours or more	Hand watering allowed
Reduction in long term supply or COMCD requests more than 10% reduction	City splash pads shut off
Lake level drops to 1029 feet or below	Cannot use potable water to refill ponds or lakes
Large portion of distribution system temporarily out of service	Cannot use potable water at construction sites for dust control compaction wash downs
Stage 2 ineffective	

Chairman Miller asked what a large part of the distribution system would be and Mr. Ken Komiske, Director of Utilities, said there are several major supply lines that run through the City that could be out of service for a period of time.

Chairman Kovach asked if COMCD had reversed their request for a 10% reduction by cities using Lake Thunderbird as a water source and Ms. Walker said yes.

Ms. Walker highlighted Oklahoma City's (OKC) water conservation measures and said if the City of Norman purchases emergency water from Oklahoma City, Norman must follow Oklahoma City's conservation measures or follow a stricter plan. She said OKC is always in the mandatory odd/even watering as a minimum based on their combined lake capacity. She said OKC has a number of lakes they draw water from and if all the lakes combined are at normal level, mandatory odd/even watering is all that is required of citizens. She said if the lake levels go down, OKC switches to Stage 2 allowing two days per week watering and one day per week hand watering. If the lakes are extremely low (35% or less capacity), OKC bans all watering and outdoor washing of cars and pavement. She said Lake Thunderbird's level was down to 56% this summer and Staff was very concerned and ready to implement Stage 3 when it rained. She said Norman has not had to purchase water from OKC this summer, but in past years Norman has relied on OKC's water for the summer months. Chairman Miller asked how many years in the last ten years Norman purchased

water from OKC and Mr. Komiske said nine of those years. He said in the last three years, the City has been using their wells more often, but the well water is not as fresh and has higher levels of Chromium 6 and arsenic so the City has to watch the water quality closely.

Ms. Walker said one of the things Council can consider for the conservation plan is odd/even watering year round. She said research has shown that during a drought the more restrictive the conservation plan, the better. She said communities with year round water conservation plans recommend strong public education efforts. She said www.squeezeeverydrop.com is a great website regarding OKC's conservation efforts that include informational videos and links to sites for overall conservation efforts, not just watering. She asked for the Committee's input as to whether the City of Norman should follow OKC's conservation plan and if a lake level of 50% below normal would be a trigger for Stage 3 measures. She said if Norman has a large equipment failure there are no other lakes to rely on and Norman cannot control how much water is drawn out of the lake because we share the lake with other cities. She said that impact on Norman's plan needs to be considered and tailored to Norman.

Councilmember Kovach said he would prefer a hybrid between Norman's current plan and OKC's plan. He liked the mandatory odd/even year round and Chairman Miller agreed. Councilmember Kovach said he would like to add the 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. water ban because it does not make sense to water during a time when that water is going to evaporate and Mayor Rosenthal agreed. Councilmember Kovach said his constituents did not seem to mind reducing the water usage on their lawn, but they did seem to have a problem with not being able to wash their cars at home. He said OKC pushed that restriction to the almost emergency stage and suggested moving the ban on car washing to Stage 3. Ms. Walker asked if that could be restricted to be done on their odd/even day and Councilmember Kovach said yes, but do not eliminate it. He suggested raising the lake level numbers for triggering the different stages.

Chairman Miller said people more sensitive to the environment already understand that conservation is not just about the City not having rain for the last few months or that the lake is low now, it is really about water being a precious resource and our need to be more careful in using it. She said sprinkler systems are one of the things that make people crazy and Councilmember Kovach asked if the City requires moisture sensors on new sprinkler systems and Mr. Komiske said no, moisture sensors are quite expensive, but the City does require a rain sensor and a freeze gauge so if it is below 35 degrees the system will not work and if it is raining the system will not work. He said those are fairly inexpensive devices to install even retroactively.

Mr. Chris Mattingly, Utilities Superintendent, said during the last mandatory conservation measure he received several calls and complaints from schools and charity groups that wanted to wash cars to raise money and he asked that that be clearly defined as to what stage that fell under. Mayor Rosenthal said it was her understanding that one frustration for people with sprinkler systems is the two days of no watering on Wednesday and Thursday making it difficult to program the systems. She said odd/even days would be easier to program.

Chairman Miller said Council has heard about conservation from constituents at every Council meeting and although many times it is the same people, they are representing a constituency and they do feel passionately about water. She said Council is going to be having discussions on a wastewater rate increase and a water rate increase and people want to see that as a piece of the conservation measures. She said the City needs to keep thinking of ways to get the information to the public.

Mayor Rosenthal liked the idea that mandatory odd/even watering would be considered normal and felt it would be helpful to list all the cities that are currently under year round odd/even conservation measures. She said many of the Dallas, Texas, suburbs have gone to mandatory odd/even or more restrictive measures. She said it is important that citizens realize the City of Norman is simply implementing a good, normal practice and that you do not have to water your lawn every day. Ms. Walker said if Council decides to do a year round mandatory odd/even plan, it should be codified by ordinance so enforcement can be stronger and language be found somewhere other than just in a policy.

Mayor Rosenthal felt it would be helpful to have a recommendation from the Environmental Control Advisory Board (ECAB) for year round mandatory odd/even watering. Mr. Steve Lewis, City Manager, said he has a letter of recommendation from ECAB and Mayor Rosenthal said that should be a part of bringing this plan forward.

Mr. Komiske said Norman allows watering three days a week one week and two days a week the next week in Stage 2, while OKC allows watering two days per week. Councilmember Kovach felt two days a week would be more consistent and the more consistent a plan, the easier it is to remember and follow. Mayor Rosenthal said people need to be reminded there is no restriction on hand watering. Mr. Mattingly said OKC's Stage 3 trigger for one day a week watering is based on house numbers and suggested Norman's be based on a citizen's trash day and Councilmembers liked that idea.

Chairman Miller asked about soaker hoses and Staff felt that fell under hand watering and Chairman Miller felt that needed to be clearly defined in the plan.

Councilmember Kovach asked if the Committee wanted to raise the lake level triggers and Chairman Miller said definitely. Mayor Rosenthal asked at what lake level does COMCD trigger Stage 2 conservation measures and Mr. Mattingly said 1032 feet, which is around 64%. Mayor Rosenthal said it was easy for people to understand that the City has 50% less water. Mr. Mattingly suggested using both percentages and lake level feet when educating citizens and Councilmember Kovach suggested 66% or 1033 feet be the Stage 2 trigger.

Chairman Miller asked Staff to draft an ordinance for review at a Council Conference or Study Session.

Ms. Walker said the City is still in a drought even with recent rainfall. Councilmember Kovach said conservation is not just about drought, it is about being fiscally responsible as well. Mr. Komiske agreed and said it is a conservation plan not a drought plan. Mayor Rosenthal said education should be put into the context that all stages assume increased conservation. Chairman Miller said graphs are impressive and help people realize that what they have been doing as far as conservation efforts does make a difference. Mayor Rosenthal suggested education include pictures of Lake Thunderbird when water levels are normal and at the lowest level. She said pictures speak for themselves.

Mr. Komiske asked about enforcement and said some cities go out and hammer people with fines immediately, but that is not how Norman usually handles conservation violations. Ms. Walker said there is a provision in the conservation policy that carries a hefty fine for violations, but the City's enforcement policy has always been to educate the public. She said it is Council's decision on how they want enforcement handled. Mayor Rosenthal said if Staff has to go back to the same address more than once, the City should take a harder stance. She said enforcement of a location should carry over from year to year because once someone has been informed of the conservation measures there is no reason to give them leeway on future violations. Councilmember Kovach said the only problem he sees is that the person may be a renter and may not be the same renter from year to year or they may be a different property owner, but he supports the idea.

Mayor Rosenthal said there is a major initiative at the University of Oklahoma (OU) for water conservation. Mr. Komiske said OU has a great Communications Department that might work with the City on preparing educational information. Mayor Rosenthal said there is a student run public relations agency called Lindsey and Asp that takes on clients and they helped the Norman Police Department when they rolled out Community Policing. She said they might take the City on as a client and help develop a conservation campaign that includes educational literature, videos, webpage design, etc.

Items submitted for the record

1. City of Norman Water Conservation Plan 2011 as amended through February 26, 2013
2. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Water Conservation Plan," Council Oversight Committee, September 11, 2013

Item 2, being:

MISCELLANEOUS DISCUSSION.

None

ADJOURNMENT.

The meeting adjourned at 6:14 p.m.